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ABSTRACT

A round table discussion among community college presidents and humanities faculty on how to encourage adults to enroll in humanities courses resulted in eleven recommendations. These included experimentation in how to access community interests in humanities courses, the integration of humanities with occupational training to help people deal with interpersonal relationships and decision-making, the utilization of community resources and community organizations, improvement of course titles and descriptions, the inclusion of current topics into humanities curriculum, the improvement of the adult's initial impressions of college, the inclusion of ethnic identity as an humanities topic, the development of faculty skills in teaching the older adult, and the development of model and experimental programs. Two background papers are appended to the report: "Attracting Adult Learners to Humanities Courses", by Roger Yarrington, and "The Humanities and the Adult Learner", by Arthur M. Cohen. (LH)

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ED149798

American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

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FINAL REPORT

ATTRACTING ADULT LEARNERS TO HUMANITIES COURSES

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Final Report

Attracting Adult Learners to Humanities Courses

Round Table, December 15-16, 1977

A round table discussion on how to attract more adult learners, older than traditional college age, to humanities courses in community colleges, was held in Washington, D. C., December 15-16, 1977. The round table was sponsored by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) with financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Ten presidents of community colleges with humanities backgrounds in their own academic preparation were invited. They were asked to bring with them the chairmen of their humanities divisions. There were two substitutions from Kansas City, due to emergency. The final list of invitees is enclosed. Several members of the AACJC staff and NEH staff were also invited to participate. (See "Roster", Appendix A.)

A background discussion paper was prepared and sent to participants in advance, along with the roster of invitees and the proposed agenda. (See "Agenda", Appendix B.) The background paper suggested several approaches to the central question to be addressed by the round table and offered some preliminary recommendations. (See "Background Paper", Appendix C.)

The background discussion paper was also shared with Arthur Cohen of the Center for the Study of Community Colleges, Los Angeles, California, who provided an additional background paper. (See "Resource Paper", Appendix D.) He also provided a bibliography and a reprint of a relevant article from the June 1977 issue of Change Magazine: "Humanizing the Curriculum." (See Appendices E and F). These materials were also shared with the participants.

Recommendations

Introductory remarks at the round-table were made by representatives of NEH and AACJC. The discussion that followed produced these recommendations.

1. Community colleges are committed to the assessment of community needs and interests as the first step in program development. There needs to be experimentation in how to assess community interests in humanities courses. One suggestion was to base such assessments on topical questions. (Example: interest in what literature has to say about "death".)

2. Occupational education should not be concerned with job skills only. Humanities should be integrated with occupational training in a way that equips persons to deal with interpersonal relationships and critical decisions.

3. Humanities can be made interesting and important to adults by addressing topics of current concern through humanistic studies. (Example: "passages" through critical periods and changes in life.)

4. Community resources such as libraries, museums, and galleries, and activities such as college-community orchestras and drama groups should be used to relate the humanities to community life.

5. Colleges should experiment in new and additional ways to cause persons to have an initial positive contact with the college that will encourage further involvement through the humanities.

6. Outreach to the community in the humanities can be facilitated by working through community organizations. Use of existing organizational networks should be included. Examples are service clubs, labor unions, historical societies, etc. Many such groups have expressed interest in college services that can be offered by humanists and can provide an opportunity for further

cooperation in educational programs.

7. Colleges need to work on communicating to the community the programs they offer in the humanities and what the content is. For adults who have not had previous college experience, many course titles and descriptions do not convey much meaning or interest.

8. Further attempts should be made through the humanities to build on the public interest in ethnicity aroused by Roots. The desire of many persons to learn more about their pasts and to answer the question, "who am I?" can be facilitated by the humanities.

9. Regional conferences of humanists should be supported and should concentrate on development of faculty skills in teaching persons older than traditional college age. The skills of both community college master teachers and college of education specialists should be utilized.

10. Some colleges should seek to become models for humanities program development through a comprehensive approach including community assessment, organizing programs that respond to identified needs, utilization of community advisory groups, cooperation with community organizations, experiments with different locations and schedules for classes, etc. The idea here would be to achieve staff development through their involvement in developing model programs.

11. Developing new programs requires time. Released time for faculty members interested in community outreach to older students is a needed investment. An additional recommendation on this point is to experiment with a community field representative for the college in the humanities, working on development of new programs in cooperation with local organizations.

In closing NEH staff urged the community college representatives to try the ideas they had recommended and invited applications for financial assistance.

A report of the round table is being sent to the participants and the recommendations will appear in an article in the Community and Junior College Journal, published by AACJC. The recommendations will also be used by AACJC staff in additional forums and conferences on humanities programs in community colleges.

A financial report is being submitted to the NEH staff.

The financial assistance of NEH and the contributions of the round table participants is gratefully acknowledged.

Respectfully submitted,

Roger Yarrington

Roger Yarrington
Vice President, AACJC

ROSTER

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION MEETING

Dupont Plaza Hotel

Dec. 15-16, 1977

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Leonard Oliver, Assistant to the Chairman

AACJC

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Agenda

Round Table on Adult Learners in Humanities Classes

December 15-16, 1977

Dupont Plaza Hotel, Washington, D. C.

December 15

7:00 p.m. — Dinner - Dupont Room (Lower Level)

Evening Session

- Introduction of participants
- Opening statements
  - Abraham Ascher, NEH
  - Edmund Gleazer, AACJC
- Begin discussion of issues raised in background paper
- Adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

December 16

9:00 a.m. — Morning Session - Embassy Hall (Main Lobby)

- Resume discussion of issues in background paper
- Develop statement of consensus and recommendations

12:00 Noon — Luncheon - Embassy Hall (Main Lobby)

- Adjourn

C

Background Paper

AACJC Round-table
December 15-16, 1977
Washington, D. C.

Attracting Adult Learners to Humanities Courses

More persons older than traditional college age are coming to community colleges each year. What can be done to assure that humanities classes attract a share of these learners?

Average age for community college students nationally is about 29 years. Strictly speaking, virtually all students in community colleges are adults, 18 years or older. But, the concern in this discussion is the group that is older than the traditional college age: 18-21 years.

Stating it another way: assuming the young people right out of high school who come to community colleges will enroll in humanities courses in about the same proportion as in the past, what can be done now to make humanities courses attractive to the older students: the mature person coming to the college for an associate degree; for new job skills; for a social experience; for personal enrichment?

Some questions to ask are:

1. What humanities courses are we offering?
2. Where are we offering them?
3. When are we offering them?
4. How are we disseminating information on these courses?
5. Who is teaching the courses -- are they prepared for a classroom of students with widely diverse ages and experiences?

6. What success have we had in attracting older than traditional students into humanities courses?
7. What factors seem to lead to success -- or to problems -- in this effort?

How Have We Done It?

Another approach would be to ask, "How have we increased enrollments in other programs?" The first answer that suggests itself is, we have made programs accessable. They have been organized around the convenience of the learners in terms of time and place.

Community colleges have found that programs attract adult learners if courses are available in the evening, on the weekend, during the day. They have found they attract adult learners if they are available at the workplace, in easy-to-get-to shopping centers, in apartment buildings, and in retirement communities. The point is to find out when and where the learners can be reached conveniently.

Community college students who are older than traditional college age are typically employed, with family responsibilities, and attend the college part-time. Convenience in time and place are important factors for such persons.

Programs have also been successful in attracting older than traditional college-age students when the courses have responded to critical needs: skills needed for jobs, family responsibilities, health, etc. What are the critical needs of individuals in the community to which the humanities can respond?

Dealing with Issues

Are there courses in the humanities that may only peripherally touch on

concrete crises faced by all adults but would nevertheless deepen their understanding of moral and other issues they must all confront? For example, would adult learners be interested in a philosophy course that deals with a theme such as personal freedom and the modern state, a history course that concentrates on the comparative development of religion, a literature course that focuses on generational conflict? In short, would adult learners be interested in humanities courses that are rigorous and yet deal with perennial problems, the kind that thoughtful adults have always had to face.

Can the points of stress in every person's life be addressed in humanities courses in a way that will make adult learners seek such educational services for real help, as well as pleasure and enrichment, that will be gained? Can "Passages" be illuminated by the humanities: starting to work, marriage, the children leaving home, retirement? If the humanities are disciplines dealing with the human experience, they inform us about such things. But are they seen and understood in this light by the potential adult students?

Some Things that May be Needed

Perhaps some new nomenclature is needed. Is "Philosophy 101" the best language to describe what will happen in such a course?

Perhaps some new ways of teaching are needed. Is a three-hour lecture once a week the way to reach an adult who has been out of the classroom for several years? Does the teacher take into account the richness of life experience represented in a classroom of adults? Or, the dynamic potential of a classroom with traditional college-age students and adult students?

These questions suggest thought be given to staff preparation. How can

staff be prepared for the kind of teaching assignment they will find in a classroom with more mature, life-experienced, students? Can teachers be better prepared to make use of the wealth of experience brought to the classroom by more adult learners? What special teaching skills are needed? How can they be obtained?

Using Community Resources

Can adult interest in the humanities be sparked by, related to, the cultural resources of the community? We sometimes see, for example, that persons have more interest in learning a foreign language if they see an opportunity to use it. Can interest in drama be increased if related to theater offerings in the community? Can interest in art be increased by relating the course to the local gallery? Can interest in the history of some period be increased if the community has landmarks, relics, and documents (perhaps even personal recollections) of the period? What are the resources of the community that can be used in arousing interest in the humanities? Or, how can the humanities be used to arouse interest in the resources of the community?

Just as programs have been successful in community colleges by using community resources, they have also been successful by seeking ways to cooperate with other community organizations. Some time invested in thinking about resources available from labor unions, veterans' organizations, parks, departments, historical societies, chambers of commerce, as well as the museums, libraries, and other educational agencies may prove useful.

A Matter of Skills and Attitudes

How to get information on education services into the hands of potential

users of the services has been a skill learned by many community colleges. But the humanities may not have used the skills as well as some other programs, especially occupational education and recreational programs. But, why not? Is there a need for humanists to become better communicators? Or is it a matter of teachers in the humanities shying away from "hucksterism"? Do humanists need more communications skills or different attitudes toward reaching out to and attracting the public into their courses? Perhaps both are needed. What skills, attitudes are needed? From whence should the needed help, leadership come?

The ways in which humanists conduct their courses, the materials they utilize, the nomenclature they use to describe what they do and teach, the approach they make (or do not make) to the community is influenced not only by the community college but also by the discipline organizations. What is the role of the professional societies in helping the humanities attract adult learners into their classes?

The Public's Perception

It is interesting to note in a Gallup Poll commissioned by AACJC in the summer of 1977 more persons perceive community colleges as a place for academic training than vocational-technical training. This is notable in view of the fact that about 55% of the persons enrolled in community colleges are there for occupational training. The general public, however, seems to see the institution in a different light from the persons who are actually using it.

The question was asked: Which statement best describes the primary function of a community college? "preliminary academic training" was the response of 45% of the persons asked. Vocational-technical training was next highest with only 22%.

The community college was seen as an institution for preliminary academic training by an even larger percentage of the top income group (57%), the top education attainment group (59%), and the top occupational [professional] group (60%).

This public perception of the community college would indicate -- on the one hand -- the need for better information on the services actually offered, but -- on the other hand -- it could also indicate a challenging opportunity for humanities courses to better fulfill the public perception of why the college is there.

A New View of Community College Teaching

One way to look at community college teaching is that it is a place to teach one's discipline. Another way that has been suggested is for the teacher to see himself or herself as a professional engaged in community development, through a particular discipline. How can the latter view be instilled? What would it mean to the community, to the college, to adult learners? Is it a desirable view?

These questions are intended to open a dialogue on how to attract adults into humanities courses. Hopefully, they will lead to additional questions, but also to some suggestions and ideas upon which some action can be taken in order to find some useful answers. Study of the humanities can give meaning to life. For this reason alone they are a valuable service the college has to offer the adults in its community.

RY:lc

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Resource Paper

THE HUMANITIES AND THE ADULT LEARNER

Since 1974 The Center for the Study of Community Colleges has been studying the humanities in two-year colleges nationwide under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. These studies have been undertaken using carefully drawn samples of colleges, faculty members, and courses, along with case studies of additional colleges. Findings have been published in The Two-Year College Instructor Today (Praeger Publishers, 1977), and in numerous articles and monographs (partial listing appended).

Many of the Center staff's interpretations of the findings suggest directions for discussion of the humanities for the adult learner. For example, the faculty teaching the humanities are much like the faculty in the other traditional academic programs. Fourteen percent of them hold Doctoral degrees, a figure that is rapidly increasing. They would like to see more humanities courses required for students in occupational programs, more extra-curricular offerings in the humanities, and a general strengthing of humanities programs. They do not know how to effect these changes. When asked for suggestions as to how the humanities in two-year colleges might be expanded, their reactions in large measure were limited to requesting that additional humanities courses be required.

Data on course offerings and extra-curricular activities were also gathered. In the past two years enrollments in humanities courses in two-year colleges nationwide have dropped by 2.6%, this at a time of general student body expansion. The largest declines have come in literature and history. Integrated Humanities courses have fared better. Philosophy is up slightly, apparently

because many courses have been converted from the traditional Survey of Western Thought to Contemporary Ethics, Logic, and concern with personal philosophy and life values.

Some colleges have undertaken modifications to make humanities courses more attractive to adult learners. Many offer conversational language courses and English as a Second Language, both of which attract sizeable percents of adults. Courses in Film Appreciation, Theatre Appreciation, and in the Great Books have also been attractive to adults. There are a few courses in literature that seem to enroll adult learners: Popular literature; Science Fiction; The Detective Novel; and Women's Literature. Very few specialized courses in history are seen. Languages for people working in the health service professions are offered for adult workers.

Some colleges have been successful in developing non-credit extra-curricular experiences for adults. Music Appreciation courses offered in connection with symphonic and opera presentations in the community have been tried successfully. Less frequently seen is the Art Appreciation course that would tie with traveling exhibits in the museums. The political science interests of the college have been pursued through forums, many of which were done in association with the 1976 Bicentennial. Colloquiums and lecture series are also sometimes seen on such special topics as Local History and the Quality of Life.

The question of what can be done to attract additional adult learners to humanities courses is a problem in curriculum planning, packaging, and promotion. Adult learners might well be attracted to such courses as Religious and Philosophical Views of Euthanasia; Life Cycles in Other Cultures; Local Historical Preservation; Languages for Travelers; Music and Art Appreciation (keyed to presentations in the community); Forum on Contemporary American

Governmental Problems; The Politics of the Middle East; and Philosophical Perspectives of the Good Life. These types of courses would have to be presented especially so that adults could attend: probably at night, once a week, in two or three hour segments, offered in locations where they are easily accessible to commuters.

Promotion is essential. Courses need to be advertised. It is necessary to tie curriculum and course planning together with plans for attracting the students. And college staff members must arrange to do this themselves. They may effect association with other agencies in the community that are concerned with the humanities, but the preparation and promotion of humanities course offerings can best be coordinated by the colleges. The extent to which this is a college responsibility is no better revealed than to view the almost total neglect shown by disciplinary associations in the humanities for this aspect of the humanities in the two-year colleges.

For the humanities to succeed in attracting adult learners, those who would promote them must cast them in other than traditional course formats. Nor need the humanities be packaged as courses in themselves; they may well be organized as modules to be inserted in other courses and programs. Some success has been attained in teaching ethics in business programs, cultural variations in allied health programs, and industrial history in trades programs, to name but a few. These are short, three or six hour segments taught by humanities instructors in programs that have sizeable student enrollments or in programs where additional aspects of the humanities offer broadening of essential student knowledge.

The exact point at which intervention can be made to enhance these types of development in the humanities is not clear. Obviously it takes more than

the efforts of a single administrator or faculty member. Dissemination of ideas is important--what has been tried and how it fared. This can be done through community-college organizations and consortiums. Some colleges should experiment by creating the position, "Coordinator of Humanities" and appointing a person with over-arching responsibility for the humanities in the academic, occupational, and non-credit programs. That person could weave the separate threads of the humanities together, the humanities for adults, for transfer students, and for all other constituencies. Any efforts would be well received. There is much to do because so little is being done.

Further findings will be available during the coming year. The Center will be pleased to provide additional information on request.

Arthur M. Cohen
Los Angeles
December 1, 1977

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The following publications from the Humanities Project are available from ERIC Document Reproduction Service. For ordering information write to the Clearinghouse.

◯ An Analysis of Humanities Education in Two-Year Colleges: Phase II--The Faculty, 1975-1976. Center for the Study of Community Colleges, March 1976. 163p. ED 121 358.

Characteristics of Faculty in the following disciplinary areas:

◯ Anthropology. 7p. ED 126 975.

◯ Art. 7p. ED 126 979.

◯ Foreign Language. 8p. ED 126 973.

◯ History. 10p. ED 119 761.

◯ Liberal Arts/Drama. 7p. ED 126 976.

◯ Literature. 6p. ED 126 978.

◯ Music. 8p. ED 126 974.

◯ Philosophy. 6p. ED 126 972.

◯ Political Science. 10p. ED 119 760.

◯ Religious Studies. 7p. ED 126 977.

◯ Social Science. 13p. ED 119 759.

◯ The Faculty Member as Recluse. Keynote speech by Arthur Cohen presented at the Annual International Institute on the Community College, Lambton College, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, July 14-16, 1976. 19p. ED 125 681.

◯ The Faculty and the Humanities: Two Endangered Species. Keynote address presented by Arthur Cohen to the Western Humanities Conference, Santa Cruz, California, August 18, 1976. 19p. ED 126 980.

◯ The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: A Review of the Students. Center for the Study of Community Colleges and ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Spring 1975. 64p. ED 108 727.

◯ The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: Reviewing Curriculum and Instruction. Center for the Study of Community Colleges and ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Summer 1975. 101p. ED 110 119.

◯ The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: The Faculty in Review. Center for the Study of Community Colleges and ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Fall 1975. 52p. ED 111 469.

◯ The Humanities in Two-Year Colleges: Faculty Characteristics. Center for the Study of Community Colleges and ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Fall 1976. 71p. ED 130 721.

◯ Maximizing Responses to a Nationwide Faculty Survey. Paper presented by Arthur Cohen at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in San Francisco, California on April 19-23, 1976. 12p. ED 122 912.